

From: Barbara Willer
To: [SHS Exhibits](#)
Cc: [Sen Dembrow](#); [Sen Courtney](#); [Sen Frederick](#); [Sen MonnesAnderson](#); [Sen Steiner Hayward](#)
Subject: Senate Bill 275
Date: Wednesday, February 08, 2017 11:19:48 AM

To: Senator Sara Gelsler, Chair
Senate Human Services and Early Childhood Committee

From: Barbara Willer
Former Interim Multnomah County Commissioner
Portland Oregon

Date: February 8, 2017

Regarding: Senate Bill 275

Dear Senator Gelsler,

As a former Interim Multnomah County Commissioner and a long-time government employee, I am writing you to ask you to not allow the changes in Senate Bill 275 that would unfairly impact people with disabilities.

A few years ago, I found myself too sick to work for Multnomah County and had to resign from my position, work I loved. Because I am a well-educated person who has experienced navigating bureaucracies as part of my career, I thought I could navigate the disability process on my own, but it was much more complicated than I anticipated. I hired an attorney after being denied disability benefits twice, on my initial application and after asking for reconsideration.

Once I was finally scheduled for a hearing, approximately two years after applying, I sat down with my attorney to look at which records the government had obtained on those first two denials, and which were missing. It was clear that there were records that the State had not obtained prior to denying me twice, despite me alerting them to their existence. We had to track down those older records to help the judge understand just how severe my condition was.

We came up with a list of nine providers from whom we would need to request and submit records. That two hour meeting to talk about my records was incredibly tiring and wore me out for days afterward. There is no way that I would have had the energy to write or call to each of these facilities, and do the follow-up necessary to obtain all of those records.

I am dealing with health issues that can impair my focus and concentration. I simply did not have the organization and follow-up necessary to track down medical records and get them submitted in a timely way. Judges want all records submitted at least a week before a hearing date, and I would have struggled to have the energy and follow-through to make that happen, particularly as I was having ear surgery which also involved my brain in the month leading up to the hearing. If I had not been able to rely on my attorney to obtain these medical records, I am afraid that the judge would not have had sufficient information to make his decision and

might not have achieved the relatively financial stability of receiving SSD and medical coverage under Medicare.

As a person trying to live on a small pension, every single dollar counts, and particularly in advance of my disability hearing, I did not have extra funds to cover the cost of the medical records. I was grateful to learn that there was a 2015 law that would allow my lawyer to obtain the needed records on my behalf and for free. With out-of-pocket medical costs, impending surgery, and just struggling to make ends meet, I would have struggled to come up with the few hundred dollars those records could have cost if not for the existing rule.

I am grateful that this law was in place and it allowed my attorney to obtain the records on my behalf, and for the time period that was critical to proving the severity of my impairments. I cannot fathom why the state would want to modify the rule to make it harder for people to get approved for federal disability benefits.

Thank you for your service to the State of Oregon and its people. I appreciate being able to express my opinion. Please do not modify the existing law as it would be a hardship on people with disabilities.

In appreciation,

Barbara Willer

2032 NE 19th Avenue
Portland, OR 97212
503-819-9590
bwiller16@gmail.com